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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS AGRICULTURE/FAS FOR G&F

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SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S FUTURE GRAIN IMPORT NEEDS

REF: (A) PRAGUE 0286

(B) PRAGUE 3147 (76)

1. ON FEB. 24 KORF OF KOOSPOL'S GRAIN DIVISION (FOREIGN TRADING COMPANY) BRIEFED AGATT ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S FUTURE GRAIN IMPORT NEEDS.

2. CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S FUTURE GRAIN IMPORT REQUIREMENTS WILL BE LARGELY LIMITED TO CORN SINCE DEMAND FOR THIS COMMODITY GROWING MORE RAPIDLY THAN OWN PRODUCTION. IMPORTS OF OTHER GRAINS SUCH AS WHEAT SHOULD BE PHASED OUT BY 1980.

3. YEARLY IMPORT NEEDS OF CORN WILL DEPEND ON OWN PRODUCTION WHICH SO FAR HAS BEEN HIGHLY ERRATIC. PLANS ARE TO INCREASE CORN OUTPUT TO 1 MILLION TONS BY 1980 AGAINST CURRENT PRODUCTION OF .5 TO .7 MILLION TONS. IN 1977

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA PLANS TO INCREASE ITS CORN ACREAGE BY 20 PERCENT.

4. THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN GRAIN IMPORT REQUIREMENTS SINCE LAST FALL (SEE REFTEL B) WHEN ALL CONTRACTS WERE SIGNED. AT PRESENT SHIPMENTS OF CORN FROM U.S. ARE STILL ARRIVING, LATEST IS NOW UNLOADING IN ODESSA.

5. ALTHOUGH CZECHOSLOVAK CORN IMPORT REQUIREMENTS IN FUTURE AS A CHOICE SHOULD COME FOR HUNGARY AND PERHAPS ROMANIA, KORF BELIEVES THESE 2 COUNTRIES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SATISFY FULLY CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S IMPORT NEEDS IN ALL FUTURE YEARS. THIS WILL LEAVE THE WEST TO SUPPLY THE BALANCE OF CORN NEEDS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

6. KORF COMPLAINED THAT QUALITY OF CORN ARRIVING FROM THE U.S. IS CONTINUOUSLY INFERIOR WHEN COMPARED TO HUNGARIAN OR YUGOSLAV CORN AND WONDERED WHY U.S. SHIPMENTS ALWAYS CONTAIN SO MUCH DUST, TRASH AND BROKEN KERNELS (AGATT PROMISED TO PASS THIS ON TO WASHINGTON).

7. COMMENTS. KORF' APPRAISAL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S FUTURE GRAIN IMPORT NEED APPEAR TO BE TOO OPTIMISTIC, GIVEN THE COUNTRY'S DIFFICULTIES TO MEET GRAIN PRODUCTION TARGETS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS (SEE REFTEL A). IMPORTS OF CORN HAVE BEEN AVERAGING IN RECENT YEARS BETWEEN 300,000 TO 400,000 TONS BUT DURING 1976/77 IT REACHED AT LEAST 700,000 TONS. IN FACE OF CONTINUED EXPANSION OF LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION (PARTICULARLY SWINE AND POULTRY) AND THEIR OWN DIFFICULTIES TO GROW MORE CORN, GRAIN NEEDS, PARTICULARLY FOR CORN, ARE ALSO GROWING. THEREFORE, GRAIN IMPORTS IN FUTURE YEARS, EVEN WITH LARGER DOMESTIC GRAIN PRODUCTION, SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE AROUND 1.2 MILLION TONS, HALF OF WHICH SHOULD BE CONR. UNDER LONG TERM AGREEMENTS, THE USSR SHOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPLY WHEAT BUT AT REDUCED VOLUME OF AROUND .5 MILLION TONS, WHILE HUNGARY SHOULD SUPPLY AT LEAST 100,000 TONS OF WHEAT. THE BALANCE OF GRAIN IMPORTS SHOULD BE IN CORN.
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8. BECAUSE OF NEAR DISASTROUS CORN CROP IN HUNGARY IN 1976, CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL HAVE TO TURN TO WEST AGAIN FOR ITS CORN NEEDS LATER DURING 1977. BUCHANAN

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